

# North Carolina Minority Health Facts

# American Indians

Office of Minority Health and State Center for Health Statistics

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## Population

North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi and the fifth-largest American Indian population in the nation, according to the 1990 Census. In 1997, the U.S. Bureau of the Census estimated the number of American Indians living in North Carolina to be 95,398, an 18% increase from 1990.

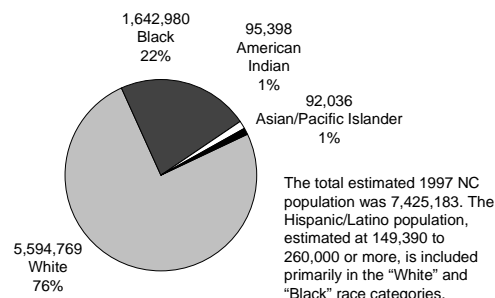
The Census Bureau estimated the 1997 median age of the state's American Indian population to be 27.8 years, while the median age for White North Carolinians was 36.6 years.

Although American Indians live in each of North Carolina's 100 counties, 80% of the population is concentrated in 11 counties, five of which are clustered in the southeastern part of the state. Fifty-one percent of North Carolina's Indian population lives in Robeson County, accounting for 39% of that county's total population.<sup>1</sup>

Among the American Indian tribes in North Carolina are seven state-recognized tribes: the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Waccamaw-Siouan, and the Indians of Person County. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee is the only tribe residing on a federal reservation and the only group served by the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Public Health Service.<sup>1</sup>

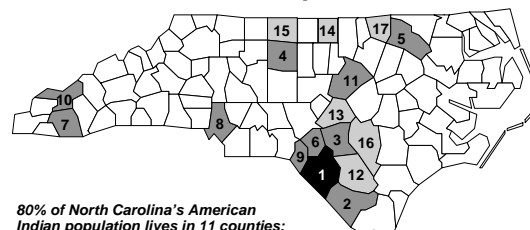
Due to the small numbers of births and deaths among American Indians in reservation counties (Graham, Jackson and Swain), most of the analyses in this report are not broken down into American Indians living on reservations and those not on reservations. For example, in the three-year span 1995-97, there was a total of 4,596 live births among American Indians in North Carolina, with only 8.6% (396) occurring in the three reservation counties. Similarly, there was a total of 1,369 American Indian deaths in the state during the same period with 10.1% (166) occurring in reservation counties. Only 9.6% (five) of the 52 reported American Indian infant deaths occurred in the reservation counties. Even after combining several years of data, these numbers are too small to provide meaningful rates or comparisons.

## 1997 NC Population Estimates by Race



1997 population estimates from U. S. Bureau of the Census, using official Census categories

## NC American Indian Population Distribution



80% of North Carolina's American Indian population lives in 11 counties:

1. Robeson County (51% of the total American Indian population)
2. Columbus
3. Cumberland
4. Guilford
5. Halifax
6. Hoke
7. Jackson
8. Mecklenburg
9. Scotland
10. Swain
11. Wake

Other counties with high numbers of American Indians are:

12. Bladen
13. Harnett
14. Person
15. Rockingham
16. Sampson
17. Warren

Seventy-nine percent of the state's American Indian population lives in rural areas. The economic status of the North Carolina Indian population is well below that of the state's general population, according to the 1990 Census, when 24% of Indian families were living below the poverty level compared to 8.6% of Whites. More than 40% of American Indian families were living below 150% of the poverty level. Approximately 20% of Indian families were headed by females. Of those households, 54% lived in poverty, while 27% of families headed by White females lived in poverty. About three-fourths of the American Indian population had an educational level of high school or less, compared to 56% of Whites. An American Indian was 2.5 times as likely to be unemployed as a White person.